

Lesson 1: Christ and the Bible

I. CHRIST AND THE BIBLE

A. Different Worldviews about God

1. **Atheism** – No God or gods.
2. **Agnosticism** – Impossible to know if there is a God or gods.
3. **Polytheism** – Belief in many gods.
4. **Monotheism** – Belief in one God.
5. **Deism** – Belief in a God, but He is impersonal and distant.

B. The Christian Worldview

- Our understanding of God comes solely from **Jesus Christ**.
- Everything we know about God must conform to and come from **what Jesus has revealed** about Himself.

II. The Significance of Jesus

A. Jesus and World Religions

- Every religion has something to say about Jesus (prophet, teacher, leader, god, Son of God, etc.).
- **Christianity** stands apart in that it believes Jesus **is God**.

B. Our Knowledge of Jesus

- Our understanding of Jesus comes from:
 - **What Jesus says about Himself.**
 - **What Jesus has done** (His works).
- If we want to know about God, **we must know Jesus**.

III. The Importance of Knowing Christ

A. Philippians 3:7-8

- Paul lists his accomplishments and good works (Phil. 3:4-6).
- He calls them **loss** compared to the **surpassing worth of knowing Christ**.
- Analogy: Like someone who spent years living recklessly but later regrets not spending time with the love of their life. Paul sees his old life as **wasted**.

B. "Rubbish" (Phil. 3:8)

- The Greek word is **skubala** (a crude term, like a bathroom word).
- Paul considers his old self-righteousness as **disgusting** compared to knowing Christ.
- It wasn't the good works themselves that were bad—it was his **trust** in them.

IV. What Does it Mean to Know Christ?

A. John 10:14-15

- Jesus defines what it means to **know Him**:
 1. **Hear His Voice** – Listen to His Word (v. 27).
 2. **Are Known by Him** – Have the comfort that Jesus thinks of and cares for you (v. 27).
 3. **Follow Him** – Trust and obey Him (v. 27).
- To know Christ is to know that **He laid down His life for you**.

B. Relationship vs. Religion

- **Religion** (Latin: *relegere*) = "To read again," following rules and customs.
- **Relationship** (Latin: *relatio*) = "To be connected," a personal and living bond with Christ.
- Christianity is both **religion** (formal worship) and **relationship** (trust in Jesus).

V. Our Chief Ambition in Life

Philippians 3:10

- The primary goal of life is **to know Christ**.
- This should also be the chief goal for:
 - Yourself
 - Your spouse
 - Your children
- Everything else is secondary.

THE BIBLE: HOW CAN WE KNOW CHRIST?

I. The Bible vs. Other Sacred Writings

- Other religions have their sacred texts (Quran, Vedas, Dianetics, etc.).
- The Bible is unique because it contains both:
 - **Law** – God's commands and expectations.
 - **Gospel** – God's work to save us through Jesus.

II. Structure of the Bible

1. **Old Testament (OT)** – 39 books, written in Hebrew (1500 BC – 450 BC).
2. **New Testament (NT)** – 27 books, written in Greek (45 AD – 95 AD).
 - Life of Jesus: 1 BC – 33 AD
 - NT written: 12 years after the resurrection.
 - Key authors:
 - **Matthew & John** – Apostles (eyewitnesses).
 - **Mark** – Authorized by Peter (apostle).

- **Luke** – Authorized by Paul (apostle).

III. How Was the Canon Formed?

1. **Jesus** – If Jesus quoted a book (e.g., Genesis, Isaiah), that book was recognized as authoritative.
2. **Apostles** – Books quoted by the apostles were also accepted.
3. **The Early Church** – Used Jesus and the apostles' authority to form the Canon.
 - The Canon was not "voted on"; it was **recognized**.

IV. Is the Bible Reliable?

- **The Problem:** We cannot "scientifically prove" the Bible without requiring some measure of faith.
- Example: Trying to prove reason is true by using reason is circular. Faith is required.

A. Reasons to Trust the Bible

1. **Logical Consistency** – The Bible has internal coherence across 66 books, 40+ authors, and 1,500+ years.
2. **Reasonableness** – The Bible aligns with human experience (sin, guilt, hope, etc.).
3. **Archaeological Evidence** – Biblical places, events, and people have been discovered and verified.
 - Example: Dead Sea Scrolls, Pool of Bethesda, Hittites, etc.
4. **Historical Reliability** – Extra-biblical sources (Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny the Younger) confirm biblical events.
5. **Prophecy Fulfillment** – Hundreds of prophecies (destruction of Jerusalem, rise/fall of empires, etc.) were fulfilled.
6. **Textual Preservation** – Over 5,800 Greek NT manuscripts (25,000+ total). The Bible has the most textual evidence of any ancient document.
7. **Subjective Transformation** – Millions of lives transformed through the Bible's message.
8. **The Resurrection of Christ** – Formidable proof and eye-witness

V. What Is the Bible About?

- **John 5:39** – The Scriptures point to Jesus.
- **Luke 24:27** – Jesus explained how all Scripture is about Him.
- **John 20:30-31** – The Bible's purpose is to bring you to faith in Jesus.

VI. Who Wrote the Bible?

- **2 Peter 1:21** – Men wrote, but they were "carried along" by the Holy Spirit.

- **2 Timothy 3:15-16** – The Scriptures are **God-breathed** (Theopneustos).
- The Bible is:
 - **Inspired** – God's very Word.
 - **Inerrant** – Without error.
 - **Infallible** – Cannot fail.
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EXCURSUS: Mainline Liberal Denominations

I. Mainline Liberal Denominations

- Examples: UMC, ELCA, Episcopal, PCUSA, etc.
- View:
 - **"The Bible contains the Word of God"** (not all of it is authoritative).
 - This leads to subjective interpretation (abortion, LGBTQ, women pastors, etc.).

II. Higher Criticism

- Approach: **Stand above** the Bible and critique it (using reason, culture, or personal feelings).
- Result: The Bible becomes a *human document* open to change and error.

III. Confessional Lutheran (LCMS) View

- **"The Bible is the Word of God."**
- Every word, chapter, and book is from God.
- Approach: Stand **under** the Bible and let it critique and change us.

IV. Lower Criticism (The Confessional Lutheran View)

- **We do not critique the Bible** — the Bible critiques us.
- **We do not change the Bible** — the Bible changes us.
- **We do not stand above the Bible** — we stand under it.

V. Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi (Worship Affects Belief)

- **Meaning:** "The law of prayer is the law of belief."
- How you act in worship will shape your beliefs.
- Example: If you treat church as casual, children will believe it is unimportant.
- If you treat church reverently, children will learn to fear and love God.

VI. Summary

- **Christ is the center** of Christianity and the Bible.
- **The Bible is God's Word** and is completely reliable.
- **The goal of life** is to know Christ personally and trust Him.

- Our faith is **not based on feelings, culture, or tradition** — it is based on **God's revealed Word**.

 **Key Takeaway:**

- To know God, you must know **Jesus**.
- To know Jesus, you must know **the Bible**.
- The Bible **is the Word of God** — not just some of it, but all of it.

Questions

1. **What are the major worldviews about God, and how does Christianity differ from them?**
2. **Why is Jesus central to Christianity, and how do other religions view Him?**
3. **In Philippians 3:7-8, Paul says he considers everything “loss” compared to knowing Christ. What does this mean for us today?**
4. **According to John 10:14-15, what does it truly mean to “know” Jesus?**
5. **How can we balance Christianity as both a religion (formal worship) and a relationship (personal faith in Jesus)?**
6. **What makes the Bible different from other religious texts, and why does that matter?**
7. **What are some key reasons we can trust the Bible as reliable and true?**
8. **How does knowing that all Scripture points to Jesus change the way we read the Bible?**
9. **What is the difference between believing “The Bible contains the Word of God” versus “The Bible is the Word of God”?**
10. **How has this lesson changed the way you think about Jesus, the Bible, or your faith?**